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RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0056
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 16, 2006

In Today's Papers

Upcoming Nevruz Celebrations

Vatan, Yeni Safak, Zaman: Tensions escalate in Turkey as the Kurdish spring festival Nevruz approaches. Yeni Safak reports that the committee organizing the celebrations in Diyarbakir has asked the Diyarbakir Governor for permission to use the Diyarbakir Fair Grounds. Reportedly, President Sezer, PM Erdogan, Iraqi President Talabani and KDP Leader Barzani, as well as Ambassadors in Ankara from 49 countries, have been invited to the celebrations. Zaman reports that in the Kurdish language invitations sent to Barzani and Talabani by the Democratic People's Party (DTP), Diyarbakir was called "Amed," a Kurdish name for the city, and Barzani was addressed as the "leader of the Kurdistan Region."

US Raid in Northern Baghdad Kills Women and Children

All Papers: Eleven people, most of them women and children were killed when a house was bombed during a US raid north of Baghdad on Wednesday. Aksam carried the news with the headline saying "The US Targeted the Children," and Posta, under the photo of the dead children, runs the headline, "Here are the Freed Children!"

Is Democracy to Blame for the Chaos?

Expressing worry about the political situation in the Middle East following the Israeli raid on the Jericho prison, columnist Semih Idiz wonders if the region does not deserve democracy. Making a distinction between democratic and non-democratic goals, he concludes in the mainstream Milliyet: "The Middle East is moving toward more chaos. Given the current situation, can we actually conclude that democracy is bad? The answer is a definite no. We should not blame democracy for all of this chaos. The blame should be put on those exploiters of democracy

for their non-democratic goals."

Turkey Uneasy over Annan's New Cyprus Rep. Moller
Vatan, Yeni Safak, Cumhuriyet: Turkey has conveyed its uneasiness on the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's new Cyprus Special Envoy Michael Moller of Denmark. Turkey believes that being pro-Greek, Moller cannot act objectively on the Cyprus issue. Cumhuriyet reports that Moller requested an appointment from Turkey to hold talks with the Turkish officials on the Cyprus issue but the request was rejected by Turkish officials.

Tolerance in Turkey Declines

Milliyet draws attention to a survey carried out with the support of Bosphorus University and the Open Society Institute. The survey, based on interviews with 1644 people in 15 provinces, reveals that there was major drop in Turkish people's tolerance for different ideas and views. 36 percent of the interviewed say they were disturbed by those refusing to observe Ramadan, 24 percent were disturbed by women who did not wear headscarf, 71 percent of the interviewed said the main task of women was to serve their husbands, 76 percent were disturbed by homosexuals, 65 percent were disturbed by couples living together without getting married, 63 percent were disturbed by men wearing earrings, 56 percent were disturbed by those who go to discos and nightclubs.

Armenian Symposium

Aksam: Turkish and foreign academics gathered at Istanbul university yesterday for a three day conference

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to discuss whether the killing of Armenians during World War 1 amounted to genocide. Turkey denies that Armenian subjects under the Ottoman Empire, were victims of genocide, but acknowledges that at least 300,000 Armenians and as many Turks died in civil war during the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Foreign Minister Gul's message was read at the opening of the symposium which said "Turkey is a country that is at peace with its past. There is no era in our history that makes us feel ashamed. However, Turks are very sensitive to slander and insults against their ancestors. I am happy to see that the same sensitivity is shown by our citizens of Armenian origin who adopt Turkey as their homes, who contribute to this country's economy, art, culture and social life." The Rector of Istanbul University, Prof. Mesut Parlak, said "genocide is a crime against humanity but there is no doubt that such a serious crime should have a legal basis. Nobody can be considered guilty before his/her offense is proven. The international law on the recognition of genocide was enacted in 1948 and it does not cover the past. So, it is not legally possible to describe the 1915 incidents as genocide."

TV Highlights

NTV, 8 AM

Domestic News

- Police captured four suspects preparing for suicide bomb attacks in the southeastern province of Batman.
- Turkey and Syria are to open a new border gate to ease the heavy traffic through the Habur border crossing.

International News

- Former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic will be laid to rest on Saturday in his hometown of Pozarevac, east of Belgrade. Belgrade said it will not hold a state funeral for Milosevic.
- Palestine President Mahmoud Abbas lashed out at Israel over the Jericho prison raid, saying his people had been humiliated.

- The UN General Assembly has adopted a proposal to create a new human rights council to promote and protect human rights around the world.

Economy News

- Turkish Central Bank acting governor Erdem Basci said he will continue tight monetary policies.

- Tourism sector representatives asked for state incentives at a meeting with PM Erdogan yesterday.

- Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

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